

Myths of Aerial Tollhouses and Their Tradition from George the Monk to the *Life of Basil the Younger*

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*Things as certain as Death and Taxes,
can be more firmly believ'd . . .*

Daniel Defoe,
The Political History of the Devil

Although Benjamin Franklin generally gets the credit, it was likely Daniel Defoe who inspired his famous quip that two things are certain: death and taxes.¹ Long before either Defoe or Franklin, the Byzantine imagination had combined the two in speculations on the fate of souls in the famous—perhaps infamous—aerial tollhouses, surely one of the strangest curios in the Byzantine *Wunderkammer*.

The tollhouses narrate a series of trials—inquisitions by demons—that souls must undergo on their ascent to heaven immediately or shortly after death. Each demonic stop examines the soul for its liability to an individual sin, and the inhabitants demand their due, the “tax” owed by the soul for its indulgence in that sin, the payment for which is serving the time until

the Last Judgment in the debtor’s prison of Hades. Apart from scattered and, at best, suggestive, references in the *Acts of Thomas*,² Clement of Alexandria,³ Origen,⁴ Ps-Makarios,⁵ the younger Symeon the

2 *Acts of Thomas* 148 (K. R. Lepsius and M. Bonnet, eds., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. 2.2 [Leipzig, 1903], 257.11–12): “Let not the toll-collectors and tax-collectors, having seen me, concern themselves with me” (Μὴ ἰδόντες με οἱ τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἀπαιτηταὶ ἐν ἑμοὶ πραγματεύσωνται). So too 167 (281.10–11): “Let not the toll-collectors see me, and let not the tax-collectors extort me!” (Μὴ βλέο πέτωσάν με οἱ τελῶναι, καὶ οἱ ἀπαιτηταὶ μὴ συκοφαντεῖτωσάν με!).

3 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.18.117.2: “For those who collect the toll-tax examine those who, weighed down with their own passions, carry some worldly thing with them” (Τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἐπαγομένους τινα τῶν κοσμικῶν κατέχουσιν οἱ τὸ τέλος ἀπαιτοῦντες τοῖς σφετέροις βαρουμένους πάθεισι).

4 Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* 23 (M. Rauer, ed., *Origenes Werke IX: Homiliae in Lucam*, 2nd ed., GCS 49 [Berlin, 1959], 144.16–21): “I also know of other toll-collectors, who after our departure hence sit at the limits of the world and, as it were, tax and examine us to see if there is not something belonging to them in us” (Οἶδα καὶ ἄλλους τελῶνας, οἱ μετὰ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῶν ἀπαλλαγὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς τέρμασι τοῦ κόσμου καθεζόμενοι οἷονεὶ τελωνοῦσι ἡμᾶς καὶ κατέχουσιν, μή τι αὐτῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστίν). See also *Hom. in Ps. XXXVI* 5.7 (PG 12:1366) and fr. 90 in Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* (Rauer, *Origenes Werke IX*) (fr. 54 in H. Crouzel, F. Fournier, and P. Périchon, eds., *Origène: Homélies sur Saint Luc*, SC 87 [Paris, 1962]).

5 Ps-Makarios, *Collectio B, Hom.* 14.15.1: “Just as toll-collectors sit in the streets, detain passersby, and extort them, so too the demons look out for souls and seize them. Indeed, the demons do not permit souls, at their departure from the body, to ascend to the dwellings in heaven and there meet their master unless they were already purely purified here and now. For [such souls] are borne

1 D. Defoe, *The Political History of the Devil as well Ancient as Modern* (London, 1726), 269. Defoe, it might be noted, is ridiculing the crude corporeality of many depictions of the devil. This passage, along with Christopher Bullock’s *The Cobbler of Preston* (London, 1716), is a prime candidate for the source of Benjamin Franklin’s more famous quip to Jean-Baptiste Leroy in 1789. Bullock has Toby Guzzle, the titular cobbler, tell his wife, Dorcas, “You lye, you are not sure; for I say, Woman, ’tis impossible to be sure of any thing but Death and Taxes—therefore hold your Tongue . . .” (*Cobbler*, 21).

Stylite,⁶ and the Nag Hammadi codices,⁷ the myth is first articulated in “beneficial tales” (δηγήσεις ψυχοφελείς)⁸ (one attributed to Anastasios of Sinai about a tax-officer [ταξέωτης];⁹ one in the meditations of St. John the Merciful¹⁰) and in a baroque cento homily falsely attributed to Cyril of Alexandria.¹¹ It finds pride of place in George the Monk’s ninth-century *Chronicon* and its fullest and most literary expression a century later in the *Life of Basil the Younger*. Thereafter, we find the myth or some aspect of it incorporated into numerous liturgical pieces,¹² theological

treatises,¹³ florilegia,¹⁴ demonologies,¹⁵ and astrological treatises.¹⁶

As Nicholas Conostas, Saskia Dirkse, Vasileios Marinis, and most recently, Eirini Afentoulidou, have argued,¹⁷ the tollhouses mark one of the several ways that late antique and later Byzantine Christians narrated what in this essay I will call the *postmortem*.¹⁸ This plurality persists, to some degree, even past the crucible of Ferrara/Florence, during which Greek theologians had to confront the highly developed Roman doctrine of purgatory. Nevertheless, as Marinis shows, trends are visible. He considers the tenth-century *Life of Basil the Younger* to be the “the most complete account of a soul’s fate after death in Byzantium,”¹⁹ and that texts on the postmortem written thereafter “essentially recycle some or most of the elements” found therein.²⁰

downward by the wicked spirits, the aerial [demons]” (Ὡσπερ οἱ τελώναι ὑποκαθίζονται εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ κατέχουσι τοὺς παριόντας καὶ διασεύουσιν, οὕτω καὶ οἱ δαίμονες ἐπιτηροῦσι τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ κατέχουσι, καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐξέρχεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐὰν μὴ ἐντεῦθεν καθαρῶς καθαρισθῶσιν, οὐκ ἐπιτρέπονται ἀνελθεῖν εἰς τὰς μονὰς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὑπαντῆσαι τῷ δεσπότῃ αὐτῶν· καταφέρονται γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν πονηρῶν πνευμάτων, τῶν ἀερίων [δαιμόνων]). Another version is found in Ps-Makarios, *Collectio H, Hom.* 43.9.

6 Symeon the Stylite, *Hom.* 22.2, 3 (G. Cozza-Luzzi, ed., *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 8.3 [Rome, 1871], 112–13).

7 *First Apocalypse of James* 33–38; the Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* 20, 22.

8 The version attributed to Makarios of Egypt (PG 34:224–229) should be dated no earlier than the tenth century for reasons discussed below (see n. 130). See E. Afentoulidou, “Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen in den byzantinischen Berichten von postumen Zollstationen,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 67 (2015): 17–42, at 27. Cf., however, S. Dirkse, “The Great Mystery: Death, Memory and the Archiving of Monastic Culture in Late Antique Religious Tales” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015); and G. J. M. Bartelink, “ΤΕΛΩΝΑΙ (Zöllner) als Dämonenbezeichnung,” *Sacris erudiri* 27 (1984): 5–18, at 13–14.

9 Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, *Narratio* 40 (F. Nau, ed., “Le texte grec des récits du moine Anastase sur les saints pères du Sinai,” *OC* 2 [1902]: 58–89, at 83–87). Cf. “Appendix” in A. Binggeli, ed. and trans., “Anastase le Sinaïte: Récits sur le Sinai et Récits utiles à l’âme. Édition, traduction, commentaire,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., Sorbonne Université, 2001).

10 Leontios, *Life of St. John the Merciful* 43 (A. J. Festugière, ed., *Léontios de Néapolis: Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* 95 [Paris, 1974], 343–437).

11 *Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul* (PG 77:1072–88); cf. the anonymous *Sermo in defunctos perutilis* (PG 89:1192A–1201C at 1200A–1201A). On this see Bartelink, “ΤΕΛΩΝΑΙ,” 15–16.

12 E.g., John Mauropous, *Canon* 2, ode 8, and the late Byzantine “Service for the Separation of Soul from Body” (Ἀκολουθία εἰς ψυχορρογούντας), discussed in V. Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art* (Cambridge, 2017), 107–26.

13 E.g., Theodore the Great Ascetic, *Capita utiles* 57, in Nikodemos of Athos, *Proemion*, in *ΦΛΟΚΑΛΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΝΗΠΤΙΚΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ*, eds. Nikodemos and Makarios, rev. ed., 5 vols. (Venice, 1782; Athens, 1862; repr. Athens, 1982), 1:313; Michael Glykas, *Questions on Sacred Scripture* 20; Philip Monotropos, *Dioptra* 5; Neophytus Inklusis, *Πανηγυρική βίβλος*, *Or.* 8.800–803; Gennadius Scholarius, *Quaestiones theologicae de praedestinatione divina et de anima* 2.3.7, 2.5.2.

14 Mark the Monk, *Florilegium* 17.1; Meletios Confessor (of Mt. Galesion), *Alphabetalphabeton* Ψ.180.49–57.

15 *Testament of Solomon*, *Narration of the Prophet and Supremely Wise King Solomon* 3.1 (C. McCown, ed., *The Testament of Solomon* [Leipzig, 1922], 102–20, at 106.32).

16 *Περὶ ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* (London, British Library, Add MS 34060, f. 421v); Damascenus Studites, *Thesaurus*, *Or.* 3.283–87; reiterated almost verbatim in *Or.* 18.118–34; John Cotrones, *Dialogus Hermippi de astrologia*.

17 N. Conostas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’: The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature,” *DOP* 55 (2001): 91–124; Dirkse, “The Great Mystery”; Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*; Afentoulidou, “Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen,” 17–18, 23–24; eadem, “Space and Power in Byzantine Accounts of the Aerial Tollhouses,” in *Cultures of Eschatology*, vol. 2, *Time, Death and Afterlife in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities*, ed. V. Wieser, V. Eltschinger, and J. Heiss (Oldenbourg, 2020), 2:603–15.

18 The postmortem refers to events taking place at or after death, including judgment, deposition in Hades, or other matters. I use it to avoid terms like “afterlife” (since it isn’t) or “provisional judgment” (which is doctrinally loaded). The postmortem is simply a way of saying “all those things that are thought to happen between death and resurrection, whatever they may be and however they may be framed.” I will generally use the term *thanatopsis* for the revelatory, homiletic, or other textualized descriptions of the postmortem.

19 Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 29.

20 Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 35.

In this article, I will offer explanations—rooted in monastic practice, social pressures, and literary taste—for why the tollhouse myth went from almost unknown to widely popular in the ninth and tenth centuries. I explore this rise primarily through George the Monk's version of the tollhouses and the two patristic florilegia that he appends to his tale, though I will also discuss the *Life of Basil the Younger*. Scholars have long pointed to George as a witness to the tollhouse myth, and Marinis has noted, albeit briefly, the signal importance of George's use of florilegium. He writes, "Unique for its time, George's attempt to establish a narrative of the afterlife based on the collection of relevant sources heralds a mentality that would become prevalent from the eleventh century on."²¹ George, I argue, testifies to transitions in both the conceptualization of the postmortem and anthology's role in the articulation and legitimation of this myth.

Reading the *Chronicon* in conversation with Bruce D. Lincoln's theory of myth,²² I argue that George molds the myth around confession and validates it in two florilegia. With respect to these, I detail four strategies of anthologization—selection, attribution, modification, and unification—that fashion a tradition around the myth. This reading shows that the tollhouse myth emphasizes legitimate (bureaucratized) confession as the means of genuine repentance and is comprehensible in the context of ninth-century monastic practices and politics. From *Basil the Younger* we see that, in its fullest form, the myth constitutes not only a protreptic but a memory map for preparing for confession. I conclude, therefore, that not only its popularity but also the myth's very logic forms part of the renovation of monastic life and its colonization of secular life taking place after the Triumph of Orthodoxy. I will close by reflecting on the implications this argument has for anthology and tradition in Byzantine culture.

Critical Frames

I begin with two hermeneutical claims: first, that myth is ideology cast in narrative form and referred to a timeless past by its mythographer; second, that anthology is a cultural aesthetic, the literary output of which is the

florilegium. Together, these illuminate the tales George tells and the patristic witnesses he adduces.

Tales, Myths, and Ideology

Though George's work is structured as annalistic historiography, A. J. Ljubarskij has shown that his real interest lies in moralizing and spiritualizing interpretations of historical events.²³ George fills his annals with timeless tales, which dislocate, reorganize, and reevaluate the transitory events of imperial history into a theological and moral, rather than historiographical, importance. Such tales take place in what Mikhail M. Bakhtin called the "absolute past," not a time in any historical sense but a "specifically evaluating category" that valorizes the past as such.²⁴ It is marked by its "conclusiveness and closedness," as opposed to the historical past that gives way to the "openended present."²⁵ History constitutes the present as inconclusive and orients it toward an as-yet-unknown future. George's tales orient the present toward a past that is not only exalted at the present's expense but is also removed from any real flow of time. The absolute past is an ἀρχή, an origin and evaluative principle for everything that emerges from it. For George, the absolute past is the unchanging metaphysical realities that are, in various ways, revealed during and through the events of political histories. What is true about the past is not what "has happened" but that which always is; what is true about the present is determined by its morally and theologically defined relation to this reality.

This raises the question of *how* George makes the hermeneutical connection between historical events and the timeless tales in which they find meaning. To illuminate the hermeneutical and constructive work George is doing, especially in his telling of the tollhouses, I turn to Lincoln's theory of myth.²⁶ Lincoln argues that, whatever else they may be, myths are

21 Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 29.

22 B. D. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999).

23 A. J. Ljubarskij, "George the Monk as a Short-Story Writer," *JÖB* 44 (1994): 255–64, at 259–62.

24 M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and Holquist (Austin, 2017), 3–40, at 15, 18.

25 Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 11, 30.

26 I follow S. I. Johnston in applying theories of myth as heuristic rather than normative devices: *The Story of Myth* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), 6–7.

“ideology in narrative form.”²⁷ The elements of narrative—character, setting, plot, etc.—dynamically encode social hierarchies and cultural values.²⁸ Ideology here does not imply dissemblance. It means only that what generates, organizes, and constrains the mythic narrative is a political or social order of present concern to the author.²⁹ This present is transposed into a narrative of the absolute past, beyond historical interrogation or epistemological disagreement. It may, therefore, reproduce in narrative form an existing social order or else modify, subvert, or introduce a different order and, through narration, “naturalize or legitimate it.”³⁰ Jane Baun’s study of Byzantine “tours of hell” shows clearly how village politics are reflected and valorized in the punishments and rewards of the postmortem.³¹ Likewise, I have argued that in monastic thanatopses, late Roman social structures are woven into a divine judgment that subverts Roman cultural values and instead cultivates monastic practices and virtues.³² In these instances, the mythographer or visionary constructs an absolute past (the metaphysical reality) not only with materials from the present but in service of the present. In George’s case, this means that he builds the tollhouse myth around ideologies of confession and repentance that were emerging in the ninth century and are clearly reflected in the *Life of Basil the Younger* in the tenth.

Anthologizing as Aesthetic

While George’s stories may be myths, he frequently pairs them with patristic florilegia designed to prove tales’ veracity, if not their historicity. In George’s work, the tales and their florilegia are inseparable, since the

patristic quotations serve to contextualize and legitimize each tale’s moral lesson—its vision of the metaphysical reality that ought to guide and shape human existence. Referring to these florilegia, Paul Magdalino concludes that the *Chronicon* “was a clear, deliberate and ambitious contribution to creating an orthodox culture through the *cultura della syllogè*.”³³ This latter term is owed to Paulo Odorico, who coined it to describe the Byzantine impulse to collect and organize authoritative texts.³⁴ It is a culture whose aesthetic is anthologizing. By this term, I mean a way of thinking that prizes tradition and argues through the accumulation of authoritative names and words. This aesthetic results in numerous collections, florilegia, *erotapokriseis*, and other compilations. Behind the numerous compiled texts of Byzantine literature, we can detect the anthologizing aesthetic at work.

We see that aesthetic clearly in the chapter of the *Chronicon* under discussion here. George follows the tollhouse tale with florilegia of patristic material. These anthologies are designed to show that a series of authorities “concur with this marvellous tale—I mean, as it concerns souls on their ascent to the heavens after their departure hence.”³⁵ This matters to George because for him, as for most Byzantines, theological authority clustered around discrete sites, primary among which were Scripture, conciliar decisions, and patristic texts. Writers would claim authority—and legitimacy—by showing their agreement with these sites, and the result is a “pensée théologique qui se reflète et trouve

27 Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147 (emphasis original). Lincoln develops this formulation, perhaps surprisingly, from C. Lévi-Strauss and elaborates on it at 149–51 and 207–16.

28 Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147.

29 I do not presume that there is an individual behind mythic stories, let alone a deliberate ideologue. I mean only the “principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning,” as M. Foucault put it in “What Is an Author,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. and trans. J. V. Harari (Ithaca, NY, 1979), 141–60.

30 Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 150, quote from 147.

31 J. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007), 319–71.

32 J. L. Zecher, “Death among the Desert Fathers: Evagrius and Theophilus in the Sayings Tradition,” *Sobornost* 36 (2013): 148–69.

33 P. Magdalino, “History and Orthodoxy in Tenth-Century Byzantine ‘Encyclopedism,’” in *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009*, ed. C. Macé and P. van Deun, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 212 (Leuven, 2011), 143–59, at 158.

34 P. Odorico, “La cultura della Συλλογή. 1) Il cosiddetto Enciclopedismo Bizantino. 2) Le Tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno,” *BZ* 83 (1990): 1–23. This term usefully updates P. Lemerle’s “encyclopedism,” which has been more debated than settled in Byzantine studies. See especially the essays in Macé and van Deun, *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium*.

35 George the Monk, *Chronicon* 4.23 (C. de Boor, ed., *Georgii monachi chronicon*, 2 vols., rev. ed. [Leipzig, 1978], 683.2–6; hereafter “de Boor”): Συμφωνεῖ δὲ τῷ θαύματι τοῦτο, λέγω δὴ τῷ περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν πρὸς τὴν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἄνοδον μετὰ τὴν ἐνθὲνδε μεταχώρησιν καὶ ὁ θεομύστης Χρυσόστομος διεξιὼν περὶ τῶν κεκοιμημένων οὕτως. . . . While George uses this language only for the first excerpt, he expects that the agreement extends to all.

son expression dans les écrits des saints Pères.”³⁶ Such is the purpose of the florilegium. It is an anthology of accepted authorities arranged so as to locate a dogmatic statement,³⁷ a theological claim,³⁸ or a spiritual practice³⁹ within a tradition conceived as a family tree of biblical and patristic authorities. So too the genre of beneficial tales, from which George draws many of his own stories, is anthological. An anthologizing cultural aesthetic produces florilegia as its literary residue.

Anthologists, purporting or intending only to organize and present their patristic patrimony, participate in ongoing, creative theological discourse by means of four editorial strategies: selection, attribution, modification, and unification. To borrow Aleida Assmann’s terms, anthology fashions a “canon” out of the patristic “archive.”⁴⁰ If, as Michel Foucault so aptly put it, the archive is “the law that determines what can be said,”⁴¹ the canon circumscribes what *must* be said. In terms of memory, the patristic archive is a passive site, available, contingent, often fragmentary, and certainly not necessarily utilized. The canon—which refers here not merely to the selection of religious fathers but to their arrangement and organization in florilegia—is the active site. For Byzantine theologians like George, it is not enough to locate their own claims among authoritative sites. Their editorial strategies actually select and manage those privileged sites. The archive *can* be remembered, the canon—which emerges precisely in anthology—*will* be remembered. Of course, no anthology is totalizing; attentive and erudite readers

will spot the gaps and be put in mind of other texts not included. Nevertheless, as compilers select from and organize heterogeneous patristic material, the aesthetic of anthologization discovers and crystalizes tradition which ultimately colors how readers think of material that was not included.



George participates in this cultural aesthetic by creating a florilegistic history, which is, to be sure, something of a paradox. He makes and retells myths within a historiographical frame to interpret political upheavals and annalistic happenings, but the truth of his myths is guaranteed not only or even primarily by their residing in known years and imperial reigns, but by the patristic witnesses that George adduces for them. For George, myth finds meaning in history, but patristic florilegia demonstrate the truth conveyed through myth. In what follows, I analyze the creative process of storytelling and anthologization in George’s *Chronicon* to show the taxonomic order the tollhouse myth reinforces, recalibrates, or even subverts. I look first to the subtle differences between George’s narrative of the postmortem and his source material, and then to his management and presentation of patristic support to discover the mythographer-cum-anthologist at work. In this way we can recover some of the cultural values, ecclesial practices, and embedded social pressures that contribute to the myth’s increasing popularity in the ninth and tenth centuries and begin to understand the ideological order that its tradition serves to establish.

Shaping a Myth

George’s “historiography” amounts to one sentence of *Chronicon* 4.23: “After Herakleios, Constantine his son reigned one year and was poisoned by his household.”⁴² He then launches into three moralizing tales, which the reader may believe happened during the short reign of Constantine III (February–May 641). These tales are outlined briefly in table 1.

These stories of divine retribution encompass George’s moral and religious interpretation of

36 C. Hannick, “Tradition et autorité dans la théologie byzantine,” *Oks* 59 (2010): 28–43, at 30. Hannick’s list is contestable in its details, but broadly accurate.

37 As, for example, in the Cyrilline florilegia deployed at the Council of Chalcedon, not to mention the turn to florilegia at most later councils.

38 For example, John of Damascus’s *Imagines* 1–3, each of which marries his creative argument with florilegia. A different example might be the *Synagoge* of Paul Evergetinos, in which extracts are sewn together into a vast encyclopedia of monastic life.

39 Such is certainly the case with the famous *Philokalia* of Makarios of Corinth and Nikodemos of Athos. It is constructed not only to instruct but also to demonstrate that Hesychast practices of prayer and pretensions to deification are consonant with the “majority of the Fathers.” Nikodemos of Athos, *Proemion*, in *Phlōkalia*, 1:21, 23.

40 A. Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. A. Erll and A. Nünning (Berlin, 2010), 97–107.

41 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. S. Smith (New York, 1972), 132.

42 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 673.20–21): Μετὰ δὲ Ἡράκλειον ἐβασίλευσε Κωνσταντῖνος υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἔτος α' καὶ φαρμάκῳ ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων ἀνῆρέθη.

Table 1. George the Monk's "Historiography" in *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor, *Georgii monachi chronicon*, 673–83)

Page(s)	Title and incipit	Source
673	"After Herakleios, Constantine his son reigned one year and was poisoned by his household."	—
673–75	<i>De divite sanato</i> (BHG 1322zj): "At that time a certain rich man . . ."	<i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> N 47
675–78	<i>De Synesio et Evagrio</i> (BHG 1322r): "In Alexandria the following occurred . . ."	John Moschos, <i>Spiritual Meadow</i> 195
678–83	<i>De taxeota seu milite edivivo</i> (BHG 1318a): "In Carthage, a city of Africa, there dwelt an utterly dissolute general . . ."	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Narratio</i> 40 (F. Nau) Leontios, <i>Life of St. John the Merciful</i> 43 Ps-Cyril, <i>Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul</i>

Constantine's brief reign and surprising death. First, we hear of a rich man who vowed alms for a cure to his illness but thought better of it when he recovered. A friend fears for his life and gives him the money to fulfil the vow. The rich man does and dies at the door of the church. George puts the moral of the story in the mouth of the pious friend:

For once I have designated these as gifts to the Lord God, they are his; they are accounted in the inventories above, and I have no authority over them. Ananias and Sapphira were ignorant of this, and they took as their own from what had been hallowed to the Lord—and they suffered unforeseen death just like this man. *For God is not mocked* (Galatians 6:7).⁴³

The second story is that of Evagrius the philosopher, who was converted to Christianity and, on condition that the bishop give him a receipt, distributed his goods to the poor in hopes of receiving it back "a hundredfold" in the next life. Sure enough, after dying he appears to the bishop in a dream and says, "Come to my grave, bishop, and get your receipt (ιδιόχειρον). For I have received the contract, a hundredfold, and I have no account with you. But for your perfect assurance

I have subscribed the receipt with my own hand."⁴⁴ These two tales come from the *Anonymous Collection* of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*⁴⁵ and from John Moschos's *Spiritual Meadow*,⁴⁶ respectively, though George embellishes their discussions of death a bit.

The third tale, though, which centers on the toll-house myth, is the keystone of George's moral program in this chapter of the *Chronicon*. It is significantly longer than the first two stories, more narratologically complex, and matched with two lengthy florilegia. George synthesizes his version from the *Narratio* attributed to Anastasios of Sinai,⁴⁷ the *Life of St. John the Merciful* by Leontios (also seventh century),⁴⁸ and a homily ascribed to Cyril of Alexandria.⁴⁹ This story,

44 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 677.18–22): Ἐλθὲ εἰς τὸν τάφον μου, ὦ ἐπίσκοπε, καὶ λάβε τὸ ιδιόχειρόν σου. Ἀπέλαβα γὰρ τὸ χρέος ἑκατονταπλασίονα καὶ οὐδένα λόγον ἔχω πρὸς σε, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τελεῖαν πληροφρίαν σου ιδιοχείρως ἐν αὐτῷ καθυπέγραψα.

45 BHG 1322zj, *De divite sanato* = *Apophthegmata Patrum* N 47 (J. Wortley, ed. and trans., *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation* [Cambridge, 2013], 42).

46 BHG 1322r, *De Synesio et Evagrio* = *Spiritual Meadow* 195 (PG 78.3:3077).

47 Though included by Nau as *Narratio* 40, it is almost certainly not by Anastasios, and Binggeli relegated it to an appendix in his critical edition of the *Narrationes*. It was first published as *Incerti in rem animi utilis narratio*, by F. Combefis, in his *Bibliotheca Graecorum Patrum Auctuarium novissimum* (Paris, 1672), 324–26, from Paris BNF gr. 1596, to which George's version conforms.

48 Leontios, *Life of St. John the Merciful* 43 (Festugière, *Leontios de Néapolis*, 343–437).

49 On the tale itself, see de Boor, "Zur Vision des Taxaotes," *BZ* 5 (1896): 6–10; Dirkse, "The Great Mystery," 19–23. Interestingly, Michael Glykas includes an abbreviated version of

43 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 675.1–7): Ἐξότε γὰρ ὠνόμασα ταῦτα δῶρα κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ, αὐτοῦ εἰσιν, καὶ εἰς τὰ ἄνω βρέβια ἐγράφησαν, καὶ οὐκ ἔχω αὐτῶν ἐξουσίαν. Ὅπερ Ἀνανίας καὶ Σαπφείρα ἀγνοήσαντες καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀφιερωθέντων κυρίῳ πάλιν ὡς ἐξ οἰκείων λαβόντες αἰφνίδιον θάνατον ὥσπερ καὶ οὗτος ὑπέστησαν. Θεὸς γὰρ οὐ μυκτηρίζεται.

along with the two that precede it, reinforces George's lesson for his readers: people must be prepared for death, because it comes unexpectedly and brings with it morally determined divine retribution. George's interpretation, though, rests on two key differences between his presentation and his source material, reconfiguring the tollhouse myth from protreptic *contrapasso* (measure-for-measure punishment) to an organizing principle of spiritual life.

The first difference concerns the story's main character, whom George alters. In Ps-Anastasios, the main character was a *ταξεώτης*,⁵⁰ a military or civil magistrate whose function included debt- and even tax-collection.⁵¹ This man's experience of the postmortem is an experience of his own shadow-self: the demonic tax-collectors are undoubtedly a crude *contrapasso* akin to the ironic punishments detailed in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and *Apocalypse of Paul* as well as later Byzantine tours of hell.⁵² George, however, makes the main character a *στρατιώτης*, a general and nothing besides, simultaneously erasing the *contrapasso* and emphasizing the universality of the tollhouse myth. George also dislocates the story from the historical circumstances Ps-Anastasios gave it. Ps-Anastasios wrote, "In the time of Nicetas the Patriarch, in Carthage, Africa, the following marvel happened."⁵³ Anastasios probably means the exarch Nicetas, nephew of Herakleios, placing the tale in the 620s.⁵⁴ Not only has George dislocated the story from its historical frame by putting it into 641, but he has not replaced the markers that let Anastasios fix the timing of events in the tale. For Anastasios, the

reference to Nicetas heightens the plausibility of the marvel; for George, vagueness and a shift in characterization demonstrate the universality of the revelation.

Second, and perhaps most tellingly, George inserts language of repentance and descriptions of confession. He concludes the tale thus:

All who heard were greatly benefitted and much afraid at this terrifying tale. Each mourned his own failings, but, seeing the dead man much distressed and full of tears, they urged him to taste food. But he would hear none of it. Rather, having left them he went to the churches and threw himself on the floor, shouting with a mighty voice and many tears, "Woe! Woe to unrepentant sinners! What terrible punishment and what an exacting examination await them!"⁵⁵

Here, in George's version, the revived general does not merely tell of the tollhouses, but also very publicly confesses to his own suffering and, by implication, his sins. The general's church-floor theatrics clearly recall a striking story in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*: John Klimakos claims to have watched a repentant thief, prostrate on the floor of the church in an Alexandrian coenobium, confess all his sins.⁵⁶ Intertextual echoes of the *Ladder* bolster the impression that the general is modeling public confession while exhorting others to repentance. In these details George's version differs from his source material. Where Ps-Anastasios's *ταξεώτης* cried, "Woe! Woe to sinners!," George's general shouts, "Woe! Woe to *unrepentant* sinners!"

Likewise, when the general meets the toll-collecting demons, they argue only over his *unrepented* sins and not simply over the things he had done, as is the case in Leontios's or Ps-Cyril's versions. Although Ps-Cyril does discuss repentance briefly at the close of the sermon, he does not connect it with the tollhouses.⁵⁷ George may be inspired by the *Life of Antony* on this point or, at least, by the tradition of repentance it inaugurated. In Antony's vision of his legal battle in the

this story—not the other two, but with the tollhouses!—in his *Annales* IV (I. Bekker, ed., *Michaelis Glycae annales*, Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae [Bonn, 1836], 513.11–20).

50 It is a somewhat obscure term, as witnessed by John the Monk's treating the Greek term as a proper name, *Taxiotas*. This happens with other Greek terms of rank, such as *Συγκλητικός*. John the Monk, *Liber de miraculis* 29: *De quodam divite* (P. M. Huber, ed., *Johannes Monachus Liber de Miraculis: Ein neuer Beitrag zur mittelalterlichen Mönchsliteratur*, Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 7 [Heidelberg, 1913], 91.3).

51 See Ps-Makarios, *Hom.* 15.48 (*Collectio H*): the *ταξεῶται* serve warrants on criminals.

52 Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*, 300–312, 326–66.

53 Ps-Anastasios, *Narratio* 40 (Nau, "Le texte grec," 83.17–18); so too John the Monk, *Liber de miraculis* 29 (Huber, *Johannes Monachus*, 91.2).

54 It is possible he means Nicetas I, Patriarch of Constantinople, but in that case the tale would refer to the late eighth century.

55 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 682). In this and all following quotations, underlined text is added or modified by George.

56 John Klimakos, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 4.11–12 (PG 88: 681C–84C).

57 Ps-Cyril, *Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul* (PG 77:1088A).

air, his angelic defense attorneys successfully argue that God had erased everything Antony did before becoming a monk.⁵⁸ Of course, in Athanasius's telling, it is not repentance per se, but the adoption of a monastic vocation that marks a new life. It also seems that the Lord "erased" both good *and* bad—the record is simply blank. For Athanasius, this heightens the sense of monasticism as death and rebirth. In the *Ladder's* scene of the repentant thief, the abbot tells John that an angel (unseen by John) was standing by and erasing every sin as it was uttered aloud by the thief, who was then granted entrance into the monastery and became a monk. John wove the old notion of monasticism as a radical break from one's previous life together with a more diffuse discourse of repentance and burgeoning practices of oral confession. George seems to have done much the same, but now without the monastic context. After all, the general did "renounce" his life in the city.⁵⁹ In this tale, George construes renunciation not as monastic profession but as repentance.

George does not merely hint at repentance but weaves it through the whole thanatopsis as part of a legal motif that is lacking in Anastasios's version. For example, in describing the organization of the tollhouses, George says, "To put it simply, every subsequent passion has its own toll-masters (τελωνάρχαις) and prosecutors (δικολόγους)." ⁶⁰ Anastasios writes, "And, to put it simply, every subsequent passion has its own toll-masters (τελωνάρχαι) and toll-gatherers (φορολόγοι)." ⁶¹ Ps-Cyril writes, "Simply put, each following passion, and every sin, has its own toll-takers (τελώναι) and toll-gatherers (φορολόγοι)." ⁶² Ps-Cyril indulges in the economic model at greater length, elsewhere referring to "the tollhouse keepers (τελωνάρχαι), the accountants

(λογοθέται), and the aerial tax-inspectors (πρακτοψηφισταὶ τοῦ ἀέρος)." ⁶³ George, in contrast, carries the legal motif through his thanatopsis. He writes:

The youths made a case for me (ἀπολογουμένων) and said that I had left these sins in the city when I repented. "But," said those frightening accusers, "after repenting he fell again into adultery outside the city, and died in it!" Hearing this the angels departed, leaving me as one without a defense (ὡς ἀναπολόγητον) and with no good work.⁶⁴

Anastasios's version lacks the genitive absolute (ἀπολογουμένων), while his last sentence differs substantially: "When the angels heard this and could not discover any good deed of mine equal in value, they left me and departed."⁶⁵ Using intertextual echoes of Antony's aerial ordeal, George's legal motif structures judgment in terms of evidence and admissibility rather than monetary exchange,⁶⁶ so that the fact of repentance counts more than does an imagined equality of virtue. Thus, in the *Chronicon*, the tollhouse myth supports an ideology of repentance that occupies the same space as monastic profession and is identified with verbal confession.

Shaping a Tradition

Turning to the florilegia with which George supports the tollhouse tale, we find the same legal and penitential concerns subtly woven through the various patristic authorities quoted. George stitches together numerous witnesses in defense of or perhaps witness to this

58 Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 65.4 (SC 400:304.12–306.1). The full passage runs: "As [these] were desiring, therefore, to 'settle his account' (Matt. 18:23) from his birth, those leading Antony opposed them, saying, 'The Lord has expunged things from his birth, but let him be permitted to give account from when he became a monk and offered himself to God'" (Θελόντων τοίνυν συνᾶραι λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως, ἐκώλυνον οἱ τὸν Ἀντώνιον ὁδηγοῦντες, λέγοντες ἐκείνοις. Τὰ μὲν τῆς γενέσεως ὁ Κύριος ἀπῆλειψεν· ἐξ οὗ δὲ γέγονε μοναχὸς καὶ ἐπηγγείλατο τῷ θεῷ, ἐξέστω λόγον ποιῆσαι).

59 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 678.18): ... ἐλθὼν εἰς κατάνυξιν καὶ τὴν πόλιν καταλείψας. ...

60 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 680.1–3).

61 Ps-Anastasios, *Narratio* 40 (Nau, "Le texte grec," 85.3–4).

62 Ps-Cyril, *Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul* (PG 77:1076A).

63 Ps-Cyril, *Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul* (PG 77:1073B).

64 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 680.13–19): Ἀπολογουμένων δὲ τῶν νεανίσκων ἐκείνων ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ καὶ λεγόντων, ὅτι τὰ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἁμαρτήματα συγκεχώρηται μετανοήσας, ἀλλὰ, φησὶν οἱ δεινοὶ κατήγοροι, μετανοήσας ἔπεσε πάλιν εἰς μοιχείαν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως καὶ οὕτως ἀπέθανεν. Ὅπερ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἄγγελοι ἀνεχώρησαν ἀφέντες με ὡς ἀναπολόγητον καὶ μηδὲν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἔχοντα. ... George's introduction of the legal motif recalls the thanatopsis ascribed to Theophilus of Alexandria, preserved as *Apophthegmata Patrum* A Theophilus 4 (PG 65:200A–D), parts of which became the skeleton for Ps-Cyril's homily.

65 Ps-Anastasios, *Narratio* 40 (Nau, "Le texte grec," 85.18–20): Ὡς οὖν τοῦτο ἤκουσαν οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ οὐχ εὐρόν τι ἀντισταθμῆσαι ἀγαθὸν μου ἔργον, ἀφέντες με ἀνεχώρησαν.

66 Cf. Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 53–59.

Table 2. George the Monk's Florilegia in *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor, *Georgii monachi chronicon*, 683–97)

George's First Florilegium			
Page(s)	Authority	Source (underlined = corrected attribution)	Notes
683–85	"That divine initiate, Chrysostom, concurs with this marvellous tale . . ."	Ps-Chrysostom, <i>Sermon 1: On Patience, Ascetic Exhortations, Sermon 1: On Patience</i>	
685	"Then too Gregory called the theologian says . . ."	Gregory Nazianzen, <i>Or. 7</i> (on his Brother Caesarius) 21.1–2	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Soterios</i> 21.2
685–88	"Likewise also the great Athanasius . . ."	Athanasius, <i>Life of Antony</i> 65.2–8, 19.2–3, 18.2–3, 66.2–5	
688–89	"For this reason the great and much-afflicted Eustratios prayed . . ."	Symeon Metaphrasis, <i>Martyrdom of Eustratios and His Companions</i> 32	Cf. Ephraem Graecus, <i>Prayers</i>
689	"For the same reason, Cyril the Great indicates these things . . ."	"on Jude," corresponding to no known work	
689–90	"Thus also Martyrios of Antioch says . . ."	Severos of Antioch, <i>Letter 107</i> (to Thomas, Bishop of Germanika)	Attributed to Severos in <i>Catena of Andreas the Priest</i>
690–91	"Indeed, the great Maximos Confessor says . . ."	Maximos Confessor, <i>Letter 4</i> (to John the Koubikoularios)	
692	"So too the blessed Neilos recommends . . ."	Evagrios Pontikos, <i>Hypotyposis</i> 11	
692	"No less a one than Gregory the famous Pope of Rome says . . ."	Gregory the Great, <i>Dialogues</i> 4.29	Unknown Greek translation
The Appended Florilegium			
693	"The apostolic Dionysios says . . ."	Ps-Dionysios, <i>Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i> 7.2–3	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Soterios</i> 21.1
693–94	"The divine Diadochos shows exactly the same thing . . ."	Diadochos of Photiki, <i>Gnostic Century</i> 100	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Soterios</i> 21.4; Mark the Monk, <i>Florilegium</i> 34.1
694–95	"And the sacred Neilos again says . . ."	Neilos, <i>Peristeria</i> 7.1 and 9.2	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Soterios</i> 21.5
695	"Thus, truly, Chrysostom also says again . . ."	John Chrysostom, <i>Hom.</i> 54 in Matthew	Ps-Anastasios of Sinai, <i>Soterios</i> 21.3
695–97	"And, finally, the great Basil exhorts . . ."	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Exhortation to Holy Baptism</i> 7–8; <i>Letter</i> 46.5	

version of the postmortem as a timeless metaphysical reality. He does so by means of four editorial processes endemic to anthologization: selection, attribution, modification, and unification.

First, a brief word on the construction of the florilegium examined in this article. There are actually two florilegia in *Chronicon* 4.23, both of which are outlined

in table 2. The first begins with John Chrysostom, and then continues with Gregory Nazianzen, Athanasius, the martyr Eustratios, Cyril of Alexandria, Martyrios of Antioch, Maximos Confessor, Neilos of Ancyra, and Gregory the Great. The second florilegium is shared with one found in a version of the *Soterios*, the Byzantine expansion of Anastasios of Sinai's *Questions*

and *Answers*.⁶⁷ The order differs, though. George gives excerpts from Ps-Dionysios, Diadochos of Photiki, Neilos, and Chrysostom. George concludes the second florilegium with an excerpt from Basil of Caesarea. The *Soterios* has Ps-Dionysios, Gregory Nazianzen (the same passage George includes in the first florilegium), Chrysostom, Diadochos, and Neilos. In Damascene and Ps-Maximian anthologies, the order of witnesses usually runs Scripture, Basil, Chrysostom, Gregory, and then any other witnesses, among which Neilos and Cyril are commonly included. The logic of George's ordering is unclear, but he seems to "restart" with Ps-Dionysios, whom he believes to be apostolic. The fact that all but one excerpt thereafter is shared with the *Soterios* suggests that George is using a florilegium that would also provide source material for the *Soterios*. It is also possible, though less likely, that George is the source for the *Soterios*. For George's purposes, though, the entire double-florilegium testifies to the truth of the tollhouse myth by constituting a tradition of authorities on the topic.

Selection

George chooses witnesses he can rely on, though more because of their perceived status than their words. They are called to witness because they are authorities, which George marks not by his own argument or by any *pastiche*, but by their sobriquets (see table 2): Chrysostom is "that divine initiate"; Athanasius is "the great," as are Eustratios, Cyril, Maximos, and Basil; Neilos is "blessed" and later "sacred"; Ps-Dionysios "apostolic"; Diadochos "divine"; and Gregory is "the famous pope of Rome." For the most part, though, these are not George's coinage: they are the common titles applied to each man in their liturgical commemorations and the merest reminder of the regard in which George's audience would already have held them. George's list not only includes figures—the Three Hierarchs, Cyril, and Neilos—found in nearly all other anthologies, but also several that are not so common, such as Eustratios

and Diadochos.⁶⁸ Thus, in his principles of selection, George aims for representation of the breadth of patristic tradition.

However, George's selection betrays the real variety of early Christian conceptualizations of death and judgment. Many surviving, even quite popular, accounts of judgment after death cut directly against George's tollhouse myth. For example, Dorotheos of Gaza developed an interiorized account of judgment, lacking demonic figures and focused solely on the memory of conscience.⁶⁹ Dorotheos's account would be deployed about once per century in Byzantine treatises on death: Michael Glykas, Meletios Confessor, and finally Mark Eugenikos would all make his interiority part of their own thanatopses.⁷⁰ In Mark's case, this meant using Dorotheos as a defining figure of Orthodox tradition against Latin corruptions and the doctrine of purgatory. Alternatively, traditions about the experience of souls on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after death clustered around the name of Makarios and include angelic guides but no tollhouses.⁷¹ In both cases, late antique passages about death and judgment made their way into Byzantine anthology to great—but very different—effect. Other florilegia pick up on these different trajectories. The *Melissa* tracks an interiorized version of judgment through passages in Basil and

68 Cf. *Sacra Parallela* II.A.15, which includes only the Three Hierarchs, Ps-Dionysios, and Philo; or II.M.4, which includes also Neilos, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyril of Alexandria.

69 Dorotheos of Gaza, *Instructions* 12.126–30; Dorotheos's ideas have a background of their own, probably from Origen, *On First Principles* 2.10.4, and maybe Basil of Caesarea, *On Isaiah* 3.120 and *Hom. on Psalm* 33.4. See also Theodoret, *Interpretation of Daniel* 7.26 (PG 81:1437A).

70 Michael Glykas, *Questions on Sacred Scripture* 20, 69; Meletios Confessor, *Alphabetalphabeton* Ψ.179; Mark of Ephesos, *Oration 1 on Purgatorial Fire*, discussed by Constan: "To Sleep, Perchance to Dream," 100–102.

71 *Vision of Makarios Concerning the Fate of Souls* (PG 34:385–92), reiterated in Theognostos, *Thesaurus* 15.4. The clustering around Makarios is likely due to stories like *Apophthegmata Patrum* A Makarios 38 as well as passages in the Ps-Makarian *Homilies* that concern agonistic trials at death: *Hom.* 22 (*Collectio H*), *Hom.* 34.3–4 (*Collectio B*). On the *Vision of Makarios* see A. van Lantschoot, "Révelations de Macaire et de Marc de Tarmáqa sur le sort de l'âme après la mort," *Le Muséon* 63 (1950): 159–68. N.b., this is not the same vision as the "Makarian" *Vision Concerning the Fate of Souls* found in PG 34:224–29.

67 *Soterios*, *Question* 21 (PG 89:532C–536C): "Why do people not know the hour of their death? And whether, when dying, they perceive any of the good or evil things that they will receive" (Διὰ τί οὐ προγινώσκουσιν ἄνθρωποι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς τελευτῆς αὐτῶν; καὶ εἰ ἄρα τελευτῶντες αἰσθάνονται τι μελλόντων αὐτοὺς διαδέχσθαι ἀγαθῶν, ἢ κακῶν).

Theodoret,⁷² while the *Sacra Parallela* deal—probably quite deliberately—in generalities.⁷³ George’s selection is, therefore, a possible but not a necessary choice, contingent on his own interests and motivations. Selection initiates the construction of unanimity out of a wider, and often more heterogenous, mass of patristic material.

Attribution

Hand in hand with selection goes attribution, by which words are attached to authoritative names. Much of the material in George’s florilegium is spurious, but in his writing it is attached to the famous figures he has selected. I do not mean that George makes these changes; very likely he read the attribution in the manuscripts he had. But, if so, that would have contributed to his selecting them and, in either case, the result is the same. For example, the first extract from the “blessed Neilos” is, in fact, from the *Hypotyposis* of Evagrius Pontikos, whom George would undoubtedly regard as a heretic.⁷⁴ Additionally, George quotes two commentaries on Jude. The first he ascribes to Cyril of Alexandria, though such a work is otherwise unknown. The second is more problematic. George quotes as commentary on Jude by Martyrios, the Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch (460–470), what is actually part of a *Letter* by Severos of Antioch (ca. 465–538) to Thomas, Bishop of Germanika.⁷⁵ Not only is it not a commentary, it

is not by a Chalcedonian. Evagrius and Severos can hardly join the “tradition” because they are not church fathers but heretics and schismatics, and I very much doubt George would have included them if he had realized. However, thanks to the subterranean processes of attribution, these excluded writers can re-enter and reform the patristic corpus and the tradition from which they would otherwise be excluded.

Modification

The third strategy of anthologization is modification, which may be undertaken deliberately or simply as a result of the inevitable fluidity of texts in a pre-printing world. The reality of the “fluid text” precludes us from reading florilegia such as George’s as repositories of the past and demands instead that we approach them as sites of creative intervention.

George generally repeats verbatim the texts he cites. For several—Chrysostom and Basil most notably—he splices together different texts by the same (purported) author to create a single running text. In the case of Athanasius’s *Life of Antony*, George begins with Chapter 65—a vision of the ascetic life cast in mythic terms of a legal battle in the air with demonic prosecutors and angelic defense attorneys—then adds demonological discussions from Antony’s sermon in Chapters 19 and 18 (in that order), and then appends the *Life*’s actual account of death from Chapter 66.⁷⁶ In the *Life of Antony*, the account of death in Chapter 66 is intended to contrast quite sharply with that of life in Chapter 65.⁷⁷ George’s version elides the two into a single account of death and judgment which now resembles—though not precisely—the tollhouse myth.⁷⁸

72 Ps-Antonius, *Melissa* 1.20, “On the Future Judgment” (= 156, PG 136:836D–841B), includes excerpts from Basil’s *On Isaiah* 3.120 and *Hom. on Psalm* 33.4 (PG 29:360D–361A). These passages likely inform Dorotheos (an avid reader of Basil) and are combined with Dorotheos’s account in, for example, Michael Glykas’s *Questions on Sacred Scripture* 69 (218.16–23). The same chapter contains much more “physical” depictions drawn from the Chrysostomic *Eclogae*. It is worth noting that two, seemingly opposed, depictions of the postmortem are present in the same text.

73 See, e.g., *Sacra Parallela* II.Θ.6, “On Death and the state of things in Hades” and II.Θ.8, “On Death and the fear that comes from it” (PG 96:28A–C, 44D–45C). These are both distinctly brief chapters; however, even the much longer II.A.15, “On Resurrection, judgment, and eternal punishment” (PG 95:1176B–1188B), keeps things quite broad.

74 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 692), from Evagrius, *Hypotyposis* 11 (PG 40:1261B).

75 A large portion of the letter, including everything quoted by George, is found in Greek in the *Catena of Andreas the Priest*, edited from Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson G 157 (thirteenth century), by J. A. Cramer: *Catena Graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*, vol. 8: *In catholicas epistolas* (Oxford, 1840), 153–70, at 161–62. The full letter is preserved in a Syriac translation, edited as *Letter* 107 (or

108) in E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch*, PO 12.2, 14.1 (Paris, 1915, 1920): 162–342 [1–170], 1–308 [171–479] at 14.1:260–64 [430–434]. Brooks (12.2:v–viii [167–170]) notes that the original collection of Severos’s letters ran to twenty-three books, and this letter was number twenty-seven in Book 23 (the ninth post-exilic collection). A Coptic fragment of the letter is presented by E. Lucchesi, in “Une lettre de Sévère D’Antioche à Thomas, évêque de Germanice, en version copte,” *Le Muséon* 118 (2005): 327–31. Pace de Boor, there is no lost commentary by Martyrios on Jude (see de Boor 689).

76 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 685–88).

77 See Zecher, “Antony’s Vision of Death? Athanasius of Alexandria, Palladius of Hellenopolis, and Egyptian Mortuary Religion,” *JLA* 7 (2014): 159–76, at 171–72.

78 As a sign of how well George accomplished this, see Paul Evergetinos, *Synagoge* 1.10, which makes the same use of *Life of*

George's insertions or alterations of key words are subtler. In his florilegia, George inserts legal language into his excerpt from Chrysostom⁷⁹ and language of confession or repentance into texts from Basil of Caesarea⁸⁰ and Diadochos of Photiki.⁸¹ So too he adds

Antony 65. These authors are followed by nearly every modern commentator, who has assumed—quite wrongly—that this is an account of death. For example: J. Rivière, “Rôle du démon dans le jugement particulier chez les Pères,” *RSR* 4 (1924): 43–64, at 49–50; J. Daniélou, “Les démons de l'air dans la vie d'Antoine,” *Studia Anselmiana* 38 (1956): 136–47; Bartelink, “TEΛΩΝΑΙ,” 12; Dirkse, “The Great Mystery,” 12–16; Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 17. Dissenting voices are few: Wortley, “Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell in ‘Byzantine Beneficial Tales,’” *DOP* 55 (2001): 53–69 at 62; and Zecher, “Antony's Vision of Death,” 171–72.

79 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 683.23–684.4): “For if here and now we need guides and leaders when traveling to a distant country and a foreign city, how many more helpers and guides will we need in order to support [us] and pass the ‘rulers, authorities’ [cf. Eph. 6:12], highwaymen, and lawyers of the air, which the Divine Scripture terms ‘tax-collectors’ and ‘tax-gatherers’” (Εἰ γὰρ εἰς μακρὰν χώραν καὶ ξένην πόλιν ἐνταῦθα πορευόμενοι δεόμεθα τοῦ χειραγωγούντος καὶ ὁδηγούντος, πόσων ἡμῖν δεῖ τῶν βοηθῶν μᾶλλον καὶ χειραγωγῶν τοῦ διασώσαι καὶ περᾶσαι τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας καὶ τοὺς ὁδοστάτας τοῦ αἴρος καὶ δικολόγους, οὓς τελῶνας καὶ φορολόγους ἢ θεία γραφὴ προσγορεύει).

Ps-Chrysostom, *Sermon 1: On Patience* (PG 60:727; here and in n. 80, bold portions are lacking in George's version): For if here and now we need guides when we travel to a country and a foreign city, how many more assistants and guides will we need in order to support [us] and **pass by** the ‘rulers, authorities, **and the invisible world-rulers of this’ air** [cf. Eph. 6:12], which the Divine Scripture terms ‘**persecutors**,’ tax-collectors,’ and ‘tax-gatherers’” (Εἰ γὰρ εἰς χώραν καὶ ξένην πόλιν ἐνταῦθα πορευόμενοι δεόμεθα τοῦ χειραγωγούντος, πόσων ἡμῖν δεῖ τῶν βοηθῶν καὶ χειραγωγῶν τοῦ διασώσαι καὶ διαπερᾶσαι τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας καὶ τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοὺς ἀφανεῖς τοῦ αἴρος τούτου, οὓς διώκτας καὶ τελῶνας καὶ φορολόγους ὀνομάζει ἡ θεία Γραφή). Ps-Chrysostom simply reproduces Paul's list of opponents in Eph. 6:12, while George adds new language to align the list with his own thanatopsis.

80 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 696.22–23): “You will ever say these and suchlike things as you bewail yourself, if you are snatched away before you repent” (Ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντως ἐρεῖς ἀποκλαιόμενος σεαυτὸν, ἐὰν προαναρπασθῇς τῆς μετανοίας). Basil, *Exhortation to Holy Baptism* 8 (PG 31:444B): “You will say these and suchlike things as you bewail yourself, if you are snatched away before **baptism**” (Ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐρεῖς, ἀποκλαιόμενος σεαυτὸν, ἐὰν προαναρπασθῇς τοῦ βαπτίσματος). N.b., Symeon Metaphrastes (PG 32:1229B) and *Sacra Parallela* II.M.4 (PG 96:156B–C) also replace βάπτισμα with μετάνοια, reflecting a society in which infant, as opposed to adult, baptism was regularly practiced.

81 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 693.24–694.3): “Unless we repent properly, and confess all our sins, we will discover in ourselves a certain indistinct fear at the time of our death” (Ἐὰν οὖν μὴ

language of accounting to Maximos Confessor's *Fourth Letter*.⁸² For that excerpt, George's version runs, “After this inquiry (διάγνωσις) and accounting (λογοθέτησις) in the air *with the spirits of wickedness* [Ephesians 6:12], comes the fall into Hades.”⁸³ However, Maximos has: “Following the inquiry in the air ‘with the spirits of wickedness’ [Ephesians 6:12], the vivid prefiguration of the condition of souls in Hades nourishes this salvific sadness” (ἢ μετὰ τὴν γινομένην κατὰ τὸν αἶρα πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας διάγνωσιν, τῆς τῶν ἐν ἄδη ψυχῶν, καταστάσεως ἀκριβῆς ἀνατύπωσις).⁸⁴ George changes Maximos's meditative practice into an eschatological reality and simultaneously weaves in the transactional motif so important to the tollhouse myth. This addition serves to align Maximos's letter with the language of Ps-Anastasios and Ps-Chrysostom, both of whom refer to the tollhouse as a λογοθέτησις. In his excerpt from Diadochos, George not only emphasizes confession of sins, but replaces uncertainty with dreadful certainty. Diadochos wrote that “the one who is then found in fear will not freely escape the Tartarean rulers.”⁸⁵ It is a terrifying ordeal, to be sure, but a happy conclusion is possible. George alters this to read, “For the one who is then found in fear will obviously depart to the Tartarean rulers.”⁸⁶

πρεπόντως μετανοήσωμεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν πάντων ἐξομολογησώμεθα, δειλίαν τινὰ ἀδελον ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἐξόδου ἐν ἑαυτοῖς εὐρήσομεν). Compare Diadochos of Photiki, *Gnostic Century* 100 (SC 5:162.16–17): “Unless we confess properly and about our own selves, we will discover in ourselves a certain indistinct fear at the time of our death” (Ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πρεπόντως καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐξομολογησώμεθα, δειλίαν τινὰ ἀδελον ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἐξόδου ἡμῶν εὐρήσομεν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς). Here the difference seems to be between a personal confession of thoughts and a regular confession of sins.

82 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 690.15–691.15).

83 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 691.2–4).

84 *Letter* 4 (PG 91:416B).

85 Diadochos, *Gnostic Century* 100 (SC 5:162.20): “Ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐν φόβῳ εὐρισκόμενος τότε ἐλευθερίῳ τρόπῳ τοὺς ταρταρίους οὐ παρελεύσεται ἄρχοντας.

86 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 694.5–6): “Ὁ γὰρ ἐν φόβῳ εὐρισκόμενος εὐδήλον ὅτι πρὸς τοὺς ταρταρίους ἄρχοντας ἀπελεύσεται. In this excerpt we can show that George's text reflects a deliberate departure from Diadochos's and not merely a different reading. Every manuscript in de Boor's apparatus criticus reflects this reading, and none in E. des Places's edition of Diadochos do (SC 5:162.20–21). There is total consistency in each manuscript tradition and no overlap between them. It is likely that George's version reflects his own source material, which is found also in Ps-Anastasios, *Soterios, Question* 21 (PG 89:536A): “For it is clear the

There are multiple examples of these subtle, perhaps unintentional or inherited, changes, by which the various threads of patristic thought are wound around a single conceptual pole. Nevertheless, in the act of discovering tradition, anthology, by cutting or modifying, also subtly creates it.

Unification

The last strategy is integral to the purpose of florilegia. The gathering and arrangement of biblical and patristic texts is intended to show that they agree on a given topic. Unity can be shown explicitly—through framing language—or implicitly—through the sources' inclusion in service of a proposition or doctrine. George uses framing language to show unity among his sources. He not only introduces patristic authors by their liturgical sobriquets, but he also claims that they agree with each other and, more importantly, with the tollhouse tale. Thus, he introduces his first witness by saying, "That divine initiate, Chrysostom, concurs with this marvelous tale—I mean, as it concerns souls on their ascent to the heavens after their departure hence."⁸⁷ George's claim could not be clearer: Chrysostom never explicitly alludes to the story, but he does—no, *he must*—agree with its account of the afterlife. Thereafter, authors are introduced with "so too also," "thus also," "for this reason," etc. The "divine Diadochos" apparently shows exactly the same thing in his works. George uses linking language to confer on his supporting authors the same concurrence that other authors might claim in their introductions.

Importantly, the agreement George sees refers to a point he himself has made. None of the excerpts he gives offer explicit support for the tollhouse myth; rather, George, as anthologist, discovers it in their silences and claims it on their behalf. It does not matter whether the authors cited lived centuries apart, whether they knew the story of the general, or whether they used the same language. They are now subsumed

into a homogenous tradition testifying to a transhistorical metaphysical reality. George's florilegium builds a single testimony out of numerous witnesses and relies on their status (marked by sobriquets), their orthodoxy (marked by their names), their words (whether original or not), and their agreement (marked by linking language). The cumulative effect of these four strategies is to erase historical difference or disagreement and to discover, even to create, a transhistorical unity of both the postmortem and of its conceptualization.

The reader is not invited to consider alternatives or to ponder differences. Rather, the florilegium creates a hermeneutical framework within which other texts, not included, can be interpreted. The florilegium operates as Bakhtin says myth does. It denies the possibility of change and, therefore, of a historical future, referring instead to Bakhtin's absolute past—not in time, but in death. The tollhouses simply are the experience of those who die, in whatever epoch or era they may have lived. Once that metaphysical reality is known, then it is a matter of discerning it—with indubitable sincerity and good faith—in the orthodox authorities of various times and places, and of fitting their words to the reality of which they must have been witness, albeit only in part or implication.

Tollhouses as Protreptic and Memory Map

Why should George emphasize repentance through confession and offer a legal as well as economic model of judgment? Why offer a host of patristic witnesses to a beneficial tale about death? Here we turn to ideology and consider the social, ecclesiastical, and theological pressures and trends that might explain the tollhouse myth's configuration in the *Chronicon*. It is undeniable that, whatever their origin or genealogy, the tollhouses only reached the height of their popularity in Byzantine thought during the ninth century.⁸⁸ Why then? I have already discussed the emergence of a *cultura della συλλογή* as a literary and aesthetic explanation. There are also social and cultural reasons. Afentoulidou locates the tollhouse myth as a

one who is then found in fear will depart to the Tartarean rulers" (Ὁ γὰρ ἐν φόβῳ εὐρισκόμενος τότε, δῆλον ὅτι πρὸς τοὺς ταρταρίους ἄρχοντας ἀπελεύσεται). N.b., from either George or Anastasios, the altered version finds its way into Mark the Monk, *Florilegium* 34.1. By contrast, Ps-Antonius, *Melissa* 1.58 (= 155, PG 136:958A–B), follows the Diadochean version.

87 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 683.3–5): Συμφωνεῖ δὲ τῷ θαύματι τοῦτω, λέγω δὴ τῷ περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν πρὸς τὴν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἄνοδον μετὰ τὴν ἐνθένδε μεταχώρησιν καὶ ὁ θεομύστης Χρυσόστομος...

88 On this point see especially D. Krausmüller, "How widespread was the belief in demonic tollgates in sixth- to ninth-century Byzantium?" *BZ* 112 (2019): 85–104. He argues persuasively from the evidence of John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, and others that such belief was *not* particularly widespread in the centuries prior to George and the *Life of Basil the Younger*.

postmortem expression of the fiscal-judicial framework of law that governed Byzantium in the tenth century and later. In the myth, she says, both the power of God and the ferocity of the demons are submitted to the rule of law with the result that “Die Dämonen sind keine wilden Räuber mehr, sondern Beamte, und über die Schwelle zwischen Erde und Himmel regiert Gottes Gesetz.”⁸⁹ Against this rather optimistic assessment, Conostas argues that the fracturing and multiplying bureaucracies of the Byzantine state and church and the ever-present threat of legal retribution explain the very same upsurge in popularity.⁹⁰ Conostas notes that the terrors of taxation and legal action “created great anxiety among the Byzantine populace” and so cultivated a “sense of final reckoning,” which conduced to repentance.⁹¹ The tollhouses may represent a rule of law, but one easily perceived as terrifying and represented by demonic agents. To these, I add the crucial detail that monastic confessional practices were being regularized and formalized in this era, because the form and means of repentance are what is really at stake in the development of the tollhouse myth. George writes in a time of transition, when repentance was being bureaucratized in monastic and, later, lay circles, and its authenticity inflected through prescribed practices of oral confession. The results of these shifts become visible in the *Life of Basil the Younger*.

To explain, among other monastic reforms around and following the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the abbot Theodore instituted liturgical and bureaucratic changes at the monastery of St. John of the Stoudion in Constantinople. Drawing on earlier material and a wealth of ascetic writings, Theodore emphasized administrative order and communal life, among which regular confession featured prominently. This emphasis is reflected in the *Hypotyposis* of that monastery, dating from some time after the Triumph of Orthodoxy,⁹² according to which the hegumen leaves

the choir during the Fourth Ode of the Matins Canon to hear confessions of thoughts.⁹³ While Julien Leroy rightly points out that such confession is not sacramental, it is nevertheless aimed at amendment of life and is bound up with administrative reforms and disciplinary systems referenced elsewhere in the *Hypotyposis*⁹⁴ as well as in the Studite documents *On Confession and Penance*⁹⁵ and *Theodore's Penitential*.⁹⁶ These likely postdate Theodore but are “faithful to his spirit”⁹⁷ and date to the later ninth century; we shall see their importance for tenth-century formulations of the tollhouse myth below. During the tenth century, monastic typica generally include provisions for confession and penance, first under the influence of Studite and, later, Evergetine forms.⁹⁸ During this era, repentance is increasingly refracted through confession, while both are subjected to monastic legislation and bureaucratized hierarchy.⁹⁹

Confession in the Tenth Century

While regular, sacramental confession was becoming a habitual part of life in Stoudite and later Evergetine monasticism, this period also saw monastic practices colonizing secular Christianity. In apocalyptic literature, such as the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, those who fail to confess to their parish priest are punished, as are priests who improperly discharge their office of

89 Afentoulidou, “Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen,” 37.

90 Conostas, “Death and Dying in Byzantium,” in *A People's History of Christianity*, vol. 3, *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger, (Minneapolis, 2006), 124–45.

91 Conostas, “To Sleep, Perchance to Dream,” 109.

92 T. Miller, trans., “*Stoudios: Rule of the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*,” in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, 5 vols., ed. J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (Washington, DC, 2000), 2:90.

93 *Hypotyposis of the Constitution for the Monastery of Stoudion*, in *Описание литургических рукописей*, vol. 1, *Τυπικά*, ed. A. A. Dimitrievskii (St. Petersburg, 1895), 224–38. See J. Leroy, “La vie quotiennne du moine studite,” *Irenikon* 27 (1954): 21–50, at 33, with the references there.

94 §25, Dimitrievskii, *Onucanie*, 1:224–38, at 232.

95 Found in PG 99:1721–1729; on these see especially E. Herman, “Il più antico penitenziale Greco,” *OCP* 19 (1953): 71–127. Herman argues that these were compiled in the ninth or tenth century.

96 At PG 99:1733B–1757A.

97 R. Chelij, *Theodore the Studite: The Ordering of Holiness*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford, 2002), 77.

98 The Evergetine provisions are found at *Typicon of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis* 7 and 15. These appear verbatim in a number of later typica, such as John the Monk's *Typicon of the Monastery of the Forerunner of Phoberos* 14, 36.

99 See, e.g., Michael Attaleiates, *Typicon of the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon* 29; Gregory Pakourianos, *Typicon of the Monastery of the Theotokos Petritzonitissa* 13; Irene Ducaena Komnena, *Typicon of the Monastery of the Theotokos, Full of Grace* 4; etc.

confessor.¹⁰⁰ In Paul, Bishop of Monembasia's *Beneficial Tales*, confession features prominently, although in these tales, monks (and in one instance an icon) tend to replace priests as hearers of confession. Nevertheless, John Wortley points out that some tales are addressed to non-monastic clergy, some to laity, and that the collection as a whole presupposes "a mixed audience . . . in which monks, secular clergy, and laity were not sharply distinguished from each other."¹⁰¹ Among these *Beneficial Tales* the second is particularly salient. A monk falls sick and, three days before dying, undergoes a terrifying judgment, during which he responds to invisible accusers.¹⁰² The scene is one of deathbed judgment, and so presents an account of the postmortem that participates in late antique speculations. The judgment and the dying monk's responses are cribbed from the story of Stephen the Sabaite in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*.¹⁰³ In both, the dying man responds to his accusers with a mixture of denials, admission, and uncertainty. However, in John Klimakos's version, repentance for past deeds is framed as "tears" and "service," while in Paul's account, repentance means explicitly "confession."¹⁰⁴ In both stories there is one

charge that cannot be answered. We do not know what Stephen's was, but in Paul's story it is a matter of theft and, crucially, it is a matter that the man had neglected it in his confession (ἐξαγόρευσις) to a monastic elder just before this deathbed judgment.¹⁰⁵ Once confessed, the matter is rectified, the man takes the monastic habit and—where Stephen the Sabaite died in uncertainty, saying only, "In God is mercy (ἐν τῷ Θεῷ ἐστὶν ἔλεος)"¹⁰⁶—Paul's monk dies with a clean conscience. Here, even more explicitly than in George's tollhouse myth, we see the insertion of confessional practices into discourses of repentance. The exigencies of monastic life displayed in the Studite *Rule* and Penitentials discussed above begin also to shape lay life and, perhaps most telling, are woven into accounts of the postmortem that had long been deployed as protreptics to repentance generally.¹⁰⁷

Theodora's Journey as a Memory Map

The impacts of Studite (or similar) confessional practices on secular life are felt most clearly in the grandest exposition of the tollhouse myth: the narrative of the slave Theodora in the tenth-century *Life of Basil the Younger*. In it, confessional practices such as we find in monastic typica and Paul's *Beneficial Tales* dominate the narrative, while the setting suggests the same extension of monastic practices to lay Christians. To take the latter point first, Basil the Younger is a monk¹⁰⁸ to be sure, but he eschews the monastery to live with John and Helena, a lay couple in Constantinople.¹⁰⁹ Basil's story colonizes secular life with monastic practices and rhythms: vigils, liturgy, and confession. Simultaneously, monastics are mistrusted and shown in many cases to be unworthy of the appearance of sanctity with which their habit invests in them.¹¹⁰ These transformations of

100 *Apocalypse of Anastasia* 33, on which see Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*, 352–53.

101 Wortley, *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia*, CS 159 (Kalamazoo, 1996), 47–48. Wortley argues that these tales reflect the increasing projection of monastic life onto episcopal affairs in the tenth century. If so, this social transformation would further reinforce my argument that the tollhouse myth serves an ideology founded in monastic discourses and practices but extended to the laity.

102 Paul, *Beneficial Tale* 2.3–4 (Wortley, ed., *Les récits édifiants de Paul, évêque de Monembasie, et d'autres auteurs* [Paris, 1987], 38).

103 John Klimakos, *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 7.55 (PG 88:812A–C). Even their diction is the same. For example, John says, "And that invisible and unrelenting accounting was a truly horrific, terrifying sight" (Καὶ ἦν ἀληθῶς θέαμα φρικτὸν καὶ φοβερόν, ἄορατον καὶ ἀσυγχώρητον λογοθέσιον) (*Ladder of Divine Ascent* 7.55, PG 88:812C). Paul writes, "All of us, as we heard these things, [were] seized with 'fear and trembling' [Ps. 54:6 LXX] and [were] utterly terrified at the terrifying and invisible accounting" (Ἡμῶν δὲ πάντων ἀκουόντων ταῦτα καὶ φόβῳ καὶ τρόμῳ πολλῷ συνεχομένων καὶ ἐκπληττομένων ἐπὶ τῷ φρικτῷ καὶ ἀοράτῳ λογοθέσιῳ) (*Beneficial Tale* 2.4; Wortley, *Les récits édifiants*, 38).

104 John Klimakos, *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 7.55 (PG 88:812C): "Yes, truly this, yes, but I wept, I served" (Ναί, ἀληθῶς τοῦτο, ναί· ἀλλ' ἔκλαυσα, ἀλλὰ διεκόνησα). Compare Paul, *Beneficial Tale* 2.3 (Wortley, *Les récits édifiants*, 38): "I did these things too, my lord, but I also confessed them" (Καὶ αὐτὰ, αὐθέντα μου, ἐποίησα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ ἐξηγόρευσα).

105 *Beneficial Tale* 2.2 (Wortley, *Les récits édifiants*, 36).

106 *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 7.50 (PG 88:812C).

107 Zeher, "Death among the Desert Fathers," 159–62 and 165–67.

108 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 1.2 (D. F. Sullivan, A.-M. Talbot, and S. McGrath, ed. and trans., *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger: Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version*, DOS 45 [Washington, DC, 2014]; hereafter "Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath").

109 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 1.11–12 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 84–89).

110 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 1.36 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 140–45), concerning a nun in fornication. In this instance

social structures come to a head in the *Life of Basil's* famous account of the postmortem.

In the *Life of Basil*, Theodora, a pious and elderly female slave, dies, and Gregory—the narrator—asks Basil, who had acted as her spiritual father and confessor, to know of her fate.¹¹¹ That night Gregory meets her in a vision¹¹² and she describes to him her journey through the tollhouses.¹¹³ Thereafter, she recounts also her own “tour of hell,” in which she sees the punishments that she herself has escaped as well as the state of beatitude in the garden built by Basil for his spiritual children.¹¹⁴ Her journey through the tollhouses is generally considered the supreme statement of this myth and has accordingly received much attention from scholars.¹¹⁵ Rather than rehearsing the entire tale here, I focus on two salient points that demonstrate quite clearly the penitential motivation of the tollhouse myth.

First, Theodora's narrative turns on a brilliant twist: the whole ordeal is completely avoidable if one had simply confessed. Prior to this revelation, we are led to believe that the tollhouses constitute the essence of the postmortem and expect that the narrative furthers the reputation of its saintly hero, Basil, whose enormous reserves of “spiritual gold” continually extricate Theodora from each tollhouse.¹¹⁶ But no, when she asks how anyone other than a saint like Basil could withstand such an ordeal, Theodora is told by her angelic guides:

It is not the same for everyone, but only for those like you who die before confessing and correcting their sins. For if you yourself had taken the

opportunity to confess to your spiritual father all your offenses without concealment, and had received his instructions for repentance and obeyed them and obtained his forgiveness, you would have passed by all these harsh and deadly tollhouses unhindered. . . . But since you did not confess these sins beforehand, but were satisfied with only a lengthy abstinence from them . . . all your sins are examined and scrutinized in detail by the rulers of the darkness of this air.¹¹⁷

In this grandest and most vivid version of the tollhouse myth, it turns out not to be a universal or necessary experience.¹¹⁸ The ascent to God differs for each person based on the completeness of their repentance, which is itself refracted through confessional practices. The message could not be clearer: to avoid the terror of the tollhouses, confess your sins. The angels continue this explanation into the following chapters, where they add that repentance without confession is ineffective and that confession must be made regularly to a single spiritual father.¹¹⁹ Stephen the Sabaite's response to his interrogators would not suffice since weeping and serving in repentance are insufficient.¹²⁰

Passage through the tollhouses requires either a holy life or the services of a saintly patron, and it is true that the *Life of Basil* urges both. But would it not be preferable to avoid that ordeal altogether? Is it not striking that it is avoidable? Given that Theodora's saintly patron, Basil, is also her spiritual father, the narrative subtly criticizes her less for her sins than for her failure to repent them in the proper way. The authenticity and efficacy of repentance are now founded in the

gender undoubtedly plays a role as well, though Basil's life is populated with holier secular women, such as Helena and Theodora.

111 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.1–2 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 190–93).

112 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.3–5 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 192–99).

113 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.6–40 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 198–249).

114 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.41–54 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 248–73).

115 Constan, “To Sleep, Perchance to Dream,” 108–9; Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 39–42; Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 29–35; Bartelink, “TEΛΩΝΑΙ”; and M. Jugie, “La doctrine des fins dernières dans l'Église gréco-russe,” *EO* 17 (1914): 5–22, at 17–22.

116 At least, from the fifth tollhouse onward: Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.16.25–30 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 214–15).

117 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.27.9–14, 18–22 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 229): Πάντας μὲν οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλὰ μόνους τοὺς κατὰ σὲ φθάσαντας ἀποθανεῖν ἀνεξαγορεύτους καὶ μὴ διορθωσαμένους αὐτά. Εἰ γὰρ σὺ αὐτῇ ἔφθασας ἐξαγορεύσαι τῷ πνευματικῷ σου πατρὶ τὰ πλημμελήματά σου πάντα ἀνυποστόλως καὶ δέξασθαι παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐντολὰς καὶ δεδούλευκας αὐτὰς καὶ ἔλαβες παρ' αὐτοῦ συγχώρησιν, διέβης ἂν ἀκωλύτως πάντα τὰ χαλεπὰ ταῦτα καὶ ὀλέθρια τελώνια. . . . Ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὐκ ἔφθασας ἐξαγορεύσαι ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ ἡρκέσθης ἐπὶ μόνῃ τῇ χρονίᾳ αὐτῶν ἀποχῇ . . . ἐρευνῶνται καὶ ἐξετάζονται κατὰ λεπτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἵρος τούτου.

118 Pace Afentoulidou, “Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen,” 37–38.

119 Gregory, *Life of Basil the Younger* 2.28–29 (Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 230–33).

120 Cf., perhaps, Luke of Messina, *Typicon of the Monastery of Christ the Savior in Messina* 3.

Table 3. Sins in Tollhouses and Studite Penances

	Ps-Anastasios, <i>Narratio</i> 40	George the Monk, <i>Chronicon</i> 4.23	Ps-Cyril, <i>Hom. XIV On the Departure of Souls</i>	Gregory, <i>Life of Basil the Younger</i> 2.6–39	Theodore the Studite (?), <i>On Confession and Penance</i>
1	ψεύδος	ψεύδος	καταλαλιά ψεύδος ὄρκος ἐπιορκία ἀργολογία φλυαρία ματαιολογία γαστριμαργικαὶ παραχρήσεις ἀσωτοποσία ἄμετροι γέλωτες φιλήματα ἄσεμνα καὶ ἀπρεπῆ ἄσματα πορνικά	καταλαλιά	καταλαλιά
2	φθόνος	φθόνος	δρασις ὁμμάτων περίεργος δρασις ἀχαλίνωτος δρασις νεύματα δόλια	λοιδορία	πολυλογία
3	ὑπερηφανία	λοιδορία	ἀκοή ὅσα διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης αἰσθήσεως...	φθόνος	ψεύδος
4			ὀσφρησις ὀσμῆς εὐώδεις ἀλειμμάτων ἡδονικὴ ὀσφρησις	ψεύδος	ὁ ἀκηδιαστής
5			ὅσα δι' ἀφῆς χειρῶν πονηρὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ ἐπράχθησαν	θυμὸς καὶ ὀργή	ὁ γαστρίμαργος
6			φθόνος καὶ ζήλος	ὑπερηφανία	ὁ φιλάργυρος
7			κενοδοξία καὶ ὑπερηφανία	μωρολογία	ὁ ἀναίσθητος
8			πικρία καὶ ὀργή	τόκος καὶ δόλος	ὁ κενόδοξος
9			ὀξύχολία καὶ θυμὸς	ἀκηδία καὶ κενοδοξία	ὁ δειλός
10			πορνεία, μοιχεία, μαλακία	φιλαργυρία	ὁ ὑπερήφανος
11			φόνος, φαρμακεία	πολυοινοποσία καὶ μέθη	ὁ βλάσφημος
12				μνησικακία	ὁ θυμώδης
13				ἐπασιδοί, φαρμακοί, μάγοι, μάντις, κληδονισταί	ὁ ὀργιζόμενος
14				γαστριμαργία	ὁ τῇ λύπῃ βεβυθισμένος
15				εἰδωλολατρία καὶ πᾶσα ἄλλη αἵρεσις	ὁ φονεὺς
16				ἀνδρομανία καὶ παιδοφθορία	ὁ μοιχός
17				μοιχεία	ὁ πόρνος

Table 3. Sins in Tollhouses and Studite Penances (*continued*)

	Ps-Anastasios, <i>Narratio</i> 40	George the Monk, <i>Chronicon</i> 4.23	Ps-Cyril, <i>Hom. XIV On the Departure of Souls</i>	Gregory, <i>Life of Basil the Younger</i> 2.6–39	Theodore the Studite (?), <i>On Confession and Penance</i>
18				φόνος	ὁ τὴν ἀσχημοσύ- νην ἐν τοῖς ἄρρεσιν ἐπιδεικνύμενος
19				κλοπή	ὁ ἐν ἀλόγοις τὴν ἀσχημο- σύνην ποιοῦμενος
20				πορνεία	ὁ εἰς ἀδελφὴν ἰδίαν ἐμπίπτων
21				ἀσπλαγχία καὶ σκληροκαρδία	ὁ εἰς νύμφην ἐμπίπτων
22					ὁ κλέπτης
23					ὁ τυμβώρυχος
24					ὁ γοητείαν καὶ φαρμακείαν ἐξαγορεύων
25					ὁ μάντεσι προσερχόμενος

confessional maintenance of an asymmetric relationship between an individual and their spiritual director. Monastic practice has thoroughly colonized secular life, and it is that practice of confession, with the clerical or monastic pretensions to spiritual authority it entails, that defines the tollhouse myth.

Second, the vivid description (in rhetorical terms, the *enargeia*) and journey-like organization of the tollhouses in Theodora's narrative creates a memory map for confession. For comparison, George and Anastasios name only three tollhouses, and then simply refer to "each subsequent passion."¹²¹ Ps-Cyril offers an incredibly expansive description of the first five tollhouses, which he associates with sins of the senses, before listing six others and concluding with "the rest of the defiled practices hated by God" (ἅι λοιπαὶ θεοστυγὲς καὶ μιαιραὶ πράξεις).¹²² In contrast, Theodora names, describes, and comments on twenty-one tollhouses, with the suggestion that this is all that there are. Each one is staffed by demons described in vivid detail, which behave like the vice for which they exact tolls. Each tollhouse, its crimes, and its occupants are described with vivacity

(*enargeia*) and variety (*poikilia*), both of which are classical rhetorical devices intended to foster recollection of the topic or theme. Such vivacity is visible in George's brief rendering and suggested too by Ps-Cyril's description, but the effect of such writing is that those who read Theodora's journey are likely to remember every stop and keep in mind the danger posed by each. The account is not merely true, it is memorable.

As to the tollhouses' organization, a quick glance at the lists of tollhouses and their order shows no agreement among authors, despite a broadly shared culture of moral values (table 3). Most of Evagrius's "eight thoughts" show up, though "sadness" (λύπη) is noticeably lacking in every version.¹²³ Likewise, a typical selection of sexual and social crimes, such as murder, magic, usury, and adultery, is punished. The particularities of the tollhouses certainly participate in the social configuration and management we find also in groupings of sinners in Byzantine apocalypses.¹²⁴ In the case of the tollhouses, though, it is the organization of the process of judgment itself: what counts as sin,

121 George, *Chronicon* 4.23 (de Boor 680); Ps-Anastasios, *Narratio* 40 (Nau, "Le texte grec," 85.3–4).

122 Ps-Cyril, *Hom. XIV On the Departure of the Soul* (PG 77:1076A).

123 This may owe something to John Klimakos's renovation of monastic moral psychology, in which the thought of λύπη is dropped, in part because of John's emphasis on the positive value of mourning (πένθος).

124 Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*, 326–66.

Table 4. Comparison of Tollhouses in the *Life of Basil the Younger* and Sins in *On Confession and Penance*

Tollhouse	Description of tollhouses in <i>The Life of Basil the Younger</i>	Description of sins in <i>On Confession and Penance</i>
1	καταλαλία	καταλαλιά
2	λοιδορία	
3	φθόνος	
4	ψεύδος	ψεύδος
5	θυμός και ὀργή	ὁ θυμώδης ὁ ὀργιζόμενος
6	ὑπερηφανία	ὁ ὑπερήφανος
7	μωρολογία	πολυλογία
8	τόκος και δόλος	
9	ἀκηδία και κενοδοξία	ὁ ἀκηδιαστής ὁ κενόδοξος
10	φιλαργυρία	ὁ φιλάργυρος
11	πολυοινοποσία και μέθη	
12	μνησικακία	
13	ἐπασιδοί, φαρμακκοί, μάγοι, μάντεις, κληδονισταί	ὁ γοητεῖαν και φαρμακείαν ἐξαγορεύων ὁ μάντεσι προσερχόμενος
14	γαστριμαργία	ὁ γαστρίμαργος
15	εἰδωλολατρία και πᾶσα ἄλλη αἵρεσις	
16	ἀνδρομανία και παιδοφορία	ὁ τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην ἐν τοῖς ἄρρεσιν ἐπιδεικνύμενος
17	μοιχεία	ὁ μοιχός
18	φόνος	ὁ φονεύς
19	κλοπή	ὁ κλέπτης
20	πορνεία	ὁ πόρνος ὁ ἐν ἀλόγοις τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην ποιούμενος ὁ εἰς ἀδελφὴν ἰδίαν ἐμπίπτων ὁ εἰς νύμφην ἐμπίπτων
21	ἀσπλαγχνία και σκληροκαρδία	ὁ ἀναίσθητος ὁ βλάσφημος ὁ τῇ λύπῃ βεβυθισμένος ὁ τυμβώρυχος ὁ δειλός

Note: Sins in bold under *On Confession and Penance* correspond directly to tollhouses in the *Life of Basil*.

and in what order does one uncover it? In this regard, the tollhouses most clearly resemble the Studite *On Confession and Penance*. A comparison of the sins or passions included shows striking similarities between Theodora's journey and this penitential document¹²⁵ as well as important divergences from Ps-Cyril.

While Ps-Cyril favored what I refer to as a creative five-senses approach (Ps-Cyril 1–5 in table 3), followed by various Evagrian thoughts (Ps-Cyril 7–10) divided into numerous manifestations, Theodora and the Studite text more closely resemble John Klimakos's order and list of passions in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*. In the Studite's case, this is unsurprising since *On Confession* also relies on John's metaphors to describe its various categories of sin. Indeed, given Theodore the Studite's exemplary enthusiasm for the *Ladder*, it had already become popular reading at the Stoudion Monastery.¹²⁶ Moreover, Ps-Cyril included unspecified sexual sins, but no social ones (unless one counts murder, 11). Theodora and the Studite, however, include adultery, potion-making, and divination (18–21, 23–25)—the sins of a secular Constantinople as well as urban monasticism.

Closer comparison between the *Life of Basil* and *On Confession* shows that, of the twenty-one tollhouses, fourteen are matched exactly or have close analogues in *On Confession* (table 4). In the following table, sins in bold under *On Confession* correspond directly to tollhouses in the *Life of Basil*. Additionally, several sins relate to the tollhouse of πορνεία (20), while the tollhouse of μωρολογία (7) has an analogy, at least, in the sin of πολυλογία.

Comparison between the tollhouse journey and documents preparatory for confession clearly demonstrate that the tollhouses in the *Life of Basil the Younger* are not merely protreptic, but an aide-mémoire for preparing oneself for confession. The tale is constructed along traditional mnemotechnical lines. Each station is vividly portrayed in terrifying terms, which spurs meditation and reflection on them. Likewise, the journey through the tollhouses creates a mental map onto which readers can deposit memories in their appropriate places

as they meditate. That map in turn functions as an itinerary in the recollection and communication of those memories in confession. The tollhouses form a “memory machine,” as Mary Carruthers would put it, generative of both meditation and recollection.¹²⁷ Given their overlap with penitential manuals, the most likely need for this mnemotechnical scheme—this memory map—would be preparation for confession.

Conclusion: The Myth of Tradition

What is the taxonomic order behind the tollhouse myth? To summarize, it is a development in penitential practice toward a regularized, bureaucratized, and monastic form of confession. We see confessional ideologies clearly for the first time in George the Monk's *Chronicon* and fully elaborated in the *Life of Basil the Younger*. In the vision attributed to Makarios or in Theodora's journey, the myths even levy a claim about who is authorized to hear confession.¹²⁸ Behind the tollhouses lie developments in ecclesial practice, in social hierarchies, and in perceptions of symbolic capital,¹²⁹ which together make up the totalizing culture of orthodoxy to which George sought to contribute through his florilegia. The ideology that makes sense of the narrative is not found in earlier versions of the postmortem and not even in those that contain references to tollhouses. The tale of Ps-Anastasios may be protreptic, but its logic is bound by *contrapasso*, and its version of the postmortem is limited in that regard. It is simply another beneficial tale among many, part of the variety that characterizes late antique accounts of the postmortem. The homily of Ps-Cyril is suggestive of an emphasis on introspection and self-examination, but it is George's account that first shows us the

125 Theodore the Studite (?), *On Confession and Penance* (PG 99:1721–29).

126 See Zecher, *The Role of Death in the Ladder of Divine Ascent and the Greek Ascetic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford, 2015), 6–9, with references there.

127 M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998), especially 7–46 and 116–70. Carruthers focuses on western Europeans, but her arguments certainly hold true for Byzantines as well.

128 Suggesting that debates over confessional legitimacy began somewhat earlier than Krausmüller has suggested: “‘Monks who are not priests do not have the power to bind and to loose’: The Debate about Confession in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Byzantium,” *BZ* 109 (2016): 739–68.

129 In the case of the tollhouses, the “symbolic capital” of sanctity is actually portrayed as “spiritual gold” with which one pays the demons!

ideology that would shape the myth.¹³⁰ In the forms given to the myth by George and the *Life of Basil*, the authenticity and efficacy of repentance is inflected through submission to authorized authorities, aligned with and conducive to the hierarchical structures governing monastic and parish clergy. We can, therefore, detect those economies of power, as well as burgeoning literary and intellectual impulses toward encyclopedism and collection, which all merge with gusto after the Triumph of Orthodoxy. This is clearest in the “memory map” created by Theodora’s journey through the tollhouses in the *Life of Basil the Younger*. In her journey the imagined postmortem not only clarifies values and practices in light of divine judgment, but also organizes the range of ethical or spiritual dysfunction in a vivid, mnemonically imaginative form ideally suited to preparation for confession.

Given the creation of the tollhouse myth and its tradition in this era, I want to close with some problems this study raises for the supposed early history of the tollhouse myth in Byzantium. I have argued that the tollhouse myth as it appears in the *Chronicon* and the *Life of Basil* is a product of the ninth and tenth centuries. Yet not only George but also many modern scholars have been at pains to discover its genealogy in texts from ancient Egypt, late antique monasticism, and other sources. For example, Conostas claims

130 On this basis, the vision of tollhouses attributed to Makarios of Egypt (*Vision Concerning the Fate of Souls* in PG 34:224–229) must be dated no earlier than the tenth century. The purported vision includes specific confessional language that align it with *Apocalypse of Anastasia* and, perhaps, Paul of Monembasia: “When that angel was summoned thence (for it was busy about the body’s grave), the angels said to it, ‘Tell us, friend (ἑταῖρε), did this soul repent of its sins, or did it die in them?’ And responding the angel said to them, ‘From the very hour in which it became sick (κατέπεσεν ἐν τῇ νόσῳ), when it began to be weighed down by the memory of death, it began to mourn and weep, and it called the priest of the church (ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῆς ἐκκλησίας) to come. Privately (κατὰ μόναν) it began to mourn and weep and to confess all its sins to God before the face of the priest (ἤρξατο . . . ἐξομολογεῖσθαι πάσας τῷ Θεῷ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἱερέως)’ (PG 34:225B–C).

In the earliest known manuscript (the thirteenth-century Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1868, ff. 195–199v) the vision is inserted into *Beneficial Tales 2: Concerning the Guardian Angel*. The version in PG was edited from another manuscript, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vindob. theol. gr. 200 (formerly 187), ff. 97–100v, (sixteenth century). Tellingly, in that manuscript, ff. 90–97 consist of an extract from *Life of Basil the Younger*, Book 2 (Theodora and the tollhouses).

that “the tradition of the tollgates was firmly established throughout the East long before the end of late antiquity”; he supports this claim with a series of citations, only one of which refers to “toll-takers” and none of which describe the narrative found in Anastasios, Leontios, Ps-Cyril, George, or the *Life of Basil the Younger*.¹³¹ A similar tendency is visible in key studies by Afentoulidou, Dirkse, Bartelink, and Jugie.¹³² However, is it not strange to speak of the genealogy of this myth? Both its emergence and its internal logic have as their conditions ninth-century social pressures and literary impulses within the culture of Orthodoxy, monastic reforms and a growing emphasis on liturgical confession in monasteries, and the monastic colonization of secular life. What, then, does it mean to seek its antecedents, Christian, Egyptian, Gnostic, or otherwise?

Returning to the aesthetic of anthologization, I would note that, while its editorial strategies are creative, its literary residue—the anthology or florilegium itself—appears quite the opposite. The anthology is intended to appear timeless. Yet anthology’s purpose and organizing principle are necessarily matters of present concern to the anthologist. They stake a position, which motivates—even necessitates—selection, attribution, modification, and especially unification. This position, whether explicit or not, becomes the lens through which the anthologist reads prospective sources and through which their readers in turn encounter those sources.¹³³ We cannot, however, mistake this apparent continuity for a genuine genealogy of ideas. To do so would be, as Quentin Skinner showed,

131 Conostas, “To Sleep, Perchance to Dream,” 108.

132 Afentoulidou, “Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen,” 17–25; eadem, “Space and Power,” 605–6; Dirkse, “The Great Mystery,” 16–19; Bartelink, “ΤΕΛΩΝΑΙ”; Jugie, “La doctrine des fins dernières,” 17–22. None of these authors are committed to the tollhouse myth as a doctrine but they are too inclined to elide other versions of the postmortem into its framework.

133 As will become clear, I mean something a bit different from what E. Hobsbawm called “the invention of tradition”: “Introduction,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 1–14, at 1. He had in mind “a set of practices . . . which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1). In George’s case, what is “invented” is the witness to a metaphysical reality, rather than a set of practices, although he is concerned with the latter as well.

to make the history of ideas itself into a “mythology.”¹³⁴ Skinner warns that “the particular danger with this approach is that the doctrine to be investigated so readily becomes hypostatized into an entity.” Its ideal form is thereafter discovered “in some sense immanent in history” even if authorities who might have mentioned it did not.¹³⁵ The result is a “teleological tradition” that aims to “trace the morphology of some given doctrine” through various historical periods.¹³⁶ In fashioning a canon of memory, anthology reifies a point of teaching as tradition and retrojects this tradition as a teleological and hermeneutical principle for reading that past. Temporal distance and conceptual difference are equally erased in this process, which creates a second myth, one of tradition as unchanging agreement.

In terms of the tollhouse myth, the hermeneutical principle (confession) by which George fashions his canon cannot be predicted in advance. It does not exist as such until the anthologist creates it. The scattered references scholars find to tollhouses or to aerial judgments have no teleological trajectory until they are given one retrospectively by George’s (or another’s) assertion that the tollhouse myth is traditional. The historian cannot say that Athanasius, Clement, or even Anastasios or Leontios anticipate the full exposition of the tollhouses that comes about between the ninth and tenth centuries. Ideas have genealogies, and the tollhouse myth is no exception, but its genealogy does not lead inevitably to its emergence. Rather the myth’s appearance creates the conditions necessary for it to have had a genealogy in the first place—and that impression of necessity, not to mention the homogeneity it imposes, passes as tradition.

Behind the illusion of its own antiquity in whatever genealogy is discovered, the tollhouses and the anthologies that support them can expose another kind of tradition. This kind of tradition operates in the creative process itself. This kind of tradition is always in the making, never completed; it is participation in discourse, in practice, in community. Such participation is bound by shared strategies and unspoken rules; it defers to authorities, and arranges and disposes of cultural productions, but it is not static or homogenous. We see it in the persistence of other anthologies, such as the *Melissa* that includes Dorotheos of Gaza’s strikingly psychologized postmortem, or those which simply exclude the tollhouse myth. In these other collections, whose authors presumably sought the same kind of truth as George, the variety of products reveals a unity of practice. In this sense, what is most traditional about George’s tradition is his assumption that authority accrues to the past and that his participation in Christian discourse is legitimized by his engagement with that past. Juxtaposing that participation with the apparent stasis of the anthology suggests that the primary meaning of “tradition” is not something possessed but something participated in, since the practices of tradition preexist its products. Close attention to the dynamics of anthology shows us a practice of tradition more dynamic, more heterogenous, and “more firmly to be believ’d,” even than the tollhouse version of “Death and Taxes.”

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134 Q. Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3–53, at 7, 10–12.

135 Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding,” 10.

136 Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding,” 10.